United Nations A/62/662

General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 February 2008
English
Original: French

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 12
Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Letter dated 18 January 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Bamako Consensus on the theme of "Democracy, Development and Poverty Reduction", adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies, held in Bamako from 14 to 17 November 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 12.

(*Signed*) Ami **Diallo**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

08-21952 (E) 130208 190208

Annex to the letter dated 18 January 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

The Community of Democracies
2007 Bamako Ministerial Consensus
"Democracy, Development and Poverty Reduction"

1. We the participants in the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies held in Bamako on 14-17 November 2007:

2. Declare our commitment to build on our shared principles and goals to promote democracy in all regions of the world, to support the integrity of democratic processes in societies on the democratic path and to coordinate policies to enhance the effectiveness of democratic governance.

3. We reaffirm the solemn commitment of our States to fulfill their obligations to promote universal respect for and the observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments relating to human rights and international law. We further affirm our commitment to respect and uphold the specific principles and provisions agreed to in previous Community of Democracies Ministerial Conferences in Santiago 2005, Seoul 2002, and Warsaw 2000 and to implement the actions thereof.

4. We strive to fulfill the mission of the Community of Democracies identified in the Santiago Commitment to strengthen democratic governance as an essential means to reduce poverty and support equitable and sustainable development.

5. We reaffirm the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which every member State of the United Nations committed to strengthen its capacity to implement the principles and practices of democracy, and to achieve all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and reduce poverty by half before 2015. We reaffirm our commitment to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and our commitment to the Monterrey Consensus which recognize, inter alia, that good governance at national and international levels is essential for sustainable development.

6. We emphasize that democracy, development and human rights are mutually reinforcing. We commit to supporting the integration of development and democratization in our own countries, and we seek to assist potential participant countries in our Community in their efforts to promote democracy and development.

Democracy, Development and Poverty Reduction

7. We assert that unlike undemocratic forms of government, democracies have embedded institutional advantages incontestably favorable to sustainable development. Democracies, based on respect for human rights, provide political incentives for governments to respond to the needs and demands of the people, allow for more informed and extensive policy dialogue, are more adaptable, and create necessary checks and balances on government power.

8. We recognize the advantage that democracy has over undemocratic forms of government in preventing and managing conflict as well as in responding to disasters such as famine and other events that threaten the well-being of our people.

9. We acknowledge however that some populations in developing and developed countries do not experience the democracy dividend in terms of an improvement in the quality of living. We further acknowledge that persistent inequality and poverty can lead to low public trust in political institutions and vulnerability to undemocratic practices both of which are threats to democracy.

10. We underscore that the links between democracy, human rights and equitable and sustainable development need to be strengthened. Social injustices including systemic discrimination against women, the poor, indigenous peoples, persons belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, all migrants, and other vulnerable groups, exist in well established democracies as well as in new democracies.

11. We recognize that in a democratic society, individuals and groups should have the means to express themselves and to participate in decision making that affects their lives particularly through freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We support policies and institutions targeted towards poverty reduction which empower those who are least represented, by building ownership of development and democracy reforms among citizens.

12. We stress that women's empowerment and participation at all levels of economic, political and social life is key to poverty reduction, democratic development and the full enjoyment of their human rights. We also underscore that the United Nations Millennium Declaration affirms that the equal rights and opportunities of men and women must be assured and calls for, inter alia, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as being effective and essential to eradicating poverty and hunger, in combating diseases and in stimulating sustainable development.

To these ends, we resolve to:

13. Advocate and communicate the importance of democracy for facilitating equitable and sustainable development and poverty reduction in domestic and foreign policy initiatives and in international and regional fora.

14. Earnestly engage the Community of Democracies as a forum for the exchange of experiences and information among democracies on sustainable development and economic growth within a democratic framework.

15. Identify public and private sources of funding to support regional dialogues on equitable development, poverty reduction and democracy reform supported by the establishment of a network for the exchange of information and experiences among governments, civil society organizations, political parties and the private sector.

16. Support economic, social and institutional reforms that promote development, expand social justice to benefit all people, particularly the poorest, and that are implemented in a measured way, in order to maintain their support for democracy.

17. Expand and increase reforms that promote equitable development and reduce poverty through widening access to innovative financing mechanisms, reforming land ownership, investing in basic social services, integrating the informal sector into the formal economy, ensuring decent labor, and creating an enabling environment for small and medium enterprises.

18. Give priority to girls' education, promote gender equality and economic opportunities including the property rights of women, and increase women's participation and representation in political processes.

State Institutions

19. We recognize that a central challenge for advancing development is to strengthen democracy through building key institutions of democratic governance such as a system of representation with well functioning political parties, an electoral system that guarantees free and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage, a vibrant civil society, an independent media, and civilian and democratic control of the armed forces.

20. We emphasize the importance of a system of checks and balances in government with independent judicial and legislative branches. In particular, we stress the integral role of the justice system in maintaining the rule of law and human rights, and the importance of strong parliamentary institutions to guarantee citizen representation and government accountability.

21. We acknowledge that democracy cannot thrive without a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law. As democratic leaders we will continue to work to educate citizens and strengthen institutions, in order to prevent the abuse of power and to promote social justice.

22. Without prejudice to the private sector, we highlight the importance of an effective, efficient and responsive public sector to help deliver efficient services responding to

social needs for education, housing and health care, social security, and assistance in job creation, especially for youth.

23. We stress that decentralization and strengthening the capacities of local governance institutions provide an important basis for more participatory and inclusive governance. We emphasize the importance of promoting the active participation of women in local government institutions and in the decision making process at all levels.

24. We recall in the Santiago Commitment our resolve to promote an environment for strengthening the democratization, modernization, and innovation of political parties and affirm the need for greater focus on the role of political parties in poverty reduction policies.

25. We assert that corruption is both a transnational and local problem and has a negative impact on development and poverty reduction. Corruption impacts the poor disproportionately and hinders economic development by diverting investments in infrastructure, institutions and social services. Corruption is an insidious threat to democracy that fosters an anti-democratic environment that leads to disrespect for institutions and legitimate authority.

26. We welcome voluntary partnerships and initiatives that promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) and improve the domestic good governance of natural resources. We note positively the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which is an important step in promoting CSR and good governance as facilitators for transforming natural resource revenues into economic growth and poverty reduction.

To these ends, we resolve to:

27. Support and encourage the development of nationally owned, participative and independent governance audits that monitor the quality of institutions and processes of democratic governance in a country and thereby bring about greater local transparency and accountability for each country's democratic performance.

28. Implement all applicable obligations contained in international human rights treaties including those related to women, children, all migrants including migrant workers and members of their families, political and other prisoners under detention, persons who are victims of forced disappearances, and people with disabilities, and encourage those States that are not yet a Party to all international human rights instruments to consider ratifying them.

29. Give greater attention to the engagement of the legislative branch and political parties in national poverty reduction and development planning processes and strategies.

30. Support decentralization, where appropriate, and strengthen measures that help to move decision making processes closer to all citizens, including rural populations, as part of democratic development.

31. Encourage States to allow access to domestic and international election observers with full respect to their domestic and legal frameworks and for each country organizing elections to conform with relevant international standards including the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Observers (2005).

32. Implement the obligations that we have taken on under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2005) in partnership with all stakeholders and monitor areas most prone to corruption to develop timely anti-corruption strategies.

Non-State Actors

33. We acknowledge that to create an enabling environment for democracy and development, we must focus on building partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society.

34. We reaffirm and highlight the important role played by civil society in all aspects of democratic governance and development and stress that an effective government and civil society are mutually reinforcing.

35. We stress in particular the role of civil society in increasing citizen participation in electoral processes, local governance and public policy making and the important role civil society plays in advocating on behalf of vulnerable groups in society, including women, the poor, indigenous peoples, persons belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, migrants and other vulnerable groups. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening civil society to play this crucial role in helping to build and sustain democratic societies.

36. While we are supportive of the role of civil society in promoting and strengthening democratic governance, we also underline that it is necessary and important for its organizations to be always mindful of their responsibilities, including, inter alia, respect for domestic and international laws, ethical standards and cultural diversity consistent with international human rights law.

37. We recall our commitment in Santiago to promote and implement strategies, policies, programs and concrete measures designed to foster education for democracy especially, for youth and women.

38. We underline that freedom of expression and association, and access to information and communication technologies, including the Internet, serve to strengthen civil

society, enhance citizen participation and provide a basis for protections against government abuse.

39. We strongly reject violence and all forms of extremism and intolerance including ethnic and religious hatred, xenophobia and manifestations and acts of racism and recognize the need for all participants in the democratic process to respect democratic values, human rights and the rule of law. We stress that racism is incompatible with democracy and that governments with racist or xenophobic political platforms cannot be considered democratic. We recognize that interfaith, and intercultural dialogue and cooperation for peace are crucial in engendering tolerance and moderation which are essential values of a democratic way of life.

40. Strengthening the democratic governance of countries requires that all sectors, including the private sector, fulfill their corresponding responsibilities and obligations related to human rights, labor standards, transparency and the law. We emphasize that a strong and socially responsible private sector that takes into account respect for human rights is critical for job creation, long-term growth, improved human development as well as for sustaining democracy.

41. We recognize the importance of economic freedom, market transparency, equal opportunities and democratic governance, in generating broad based prosperity that benefits all citizens. We stress that free markets operating in a free political environment is not sufficient to ensure sustainable growth. While emphasizing the primary responsibility that each country has for its own economic and social development, and the role of national policies and development strategies, we underline the importance of a democratic, transparent, and enabling international economic environment.

To these ends, we resolve to:

42. Promote civil society, including non-governmental organizations, labor and business associations, and independent media in their exercise of their democratic rights and responsibilities.

43. Increase support to civil society especially to facilitate citizens' engagement in policy making processes and in the provision of civic and democracy education. In particular, we take note of the recommendations outlined in the Global Strategic Plan for Democracy Education (2003) which sets out principles and practical measures for democracy education.

44. Support and encourage non-governmental organizations by urging countries to adopt legislation aimed at strengthening civil society and to ensure that registration, formation, funding and operation of non-governmental organizations and their peaceful activities be carried out. At the same time we remind countries that any regulation placed on, or action taken, regarding non-governmental organizations

must be consistent with domestic and international legal obligations and be enforced in an apolitical, fair and transparent manner.

45. Permit non-governmental organizations to carry out their peaceful activities without intimidation, to develop and maintain contact and cooperate with their own members and other elements of civil society at the national and international levels.

46. Provide access by all citizens to independent media and information communications technology, and facilitate the development of free and fair media, including newspapers, radio, television and the Internet. However in this context we condemn any use of the Internet aimed at inciting violence, including violence motivated by racial or religious intolerance.

47. Promote freedom of expression and the free flow of information on the Internet by allowing citizens to express themselves through online fora and allowing them broad access to websites and search engine results.

48. Develop public campaigns, with special emphasis on youth, aimed at raising awareness of the harmful effects of political extremism on democracy and the importance of respecting and protecting core democratic standards.

49. Encourage the active engagement of the private sector at national, regional and international levels in strategies and policies to promote democracy, development and respect for human rights.

50. Consider creating within the Community of Democracies a forum for private sector representatives to take a more active role in informing the actions of the Community of Democracies.

Regional Organizations

51. We emphasize the significant role regional organizations can play in promoting democracy and the critical value of a regional approach to supporting democracy, development and enhancing security.

52. We recognize that underdevelopment and extreme poverty renders countries vulnerable to the escalation of transnational organized crime including illegal trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and illegal trafficking in drugs and firearms.

53. We welcome and encourage regional and inter-regional initiatives to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in all parts of the world including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the Community of Democratic Choice established to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Eastern Europe and the Statement of Intent between the African Union and

the Organization of American States to develop joint democracy promotion activities. We also welcome the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) through which the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of best practices, seeks to ensure that the policies and standards of participating States lead to political stability, economic growth and sustainable development, the Inter American Democratic Charter, the Mercosur Ushuaia Protocol, the joint strategy between the European Union and Africa based on the principles of peace and security, good governance and human rights, trade and regional integration and social development as well as the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights and the democracy support activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

To these ends, we resolve to:

54. Improve cooperation among regional organizations themselves and between them and the United Nations through the facilitation of exchanges and active participation in regional fora on democracy and development issues.

55. Encourage the adoption, and support the implementation where these exist, of regional democracy charters and cooperative initiatives.

56. Strengthen the capacities of regional organizations and other intergovernmental organizations in matters of crisis management, conflict prevention and resolution, post conflict rehabilitation, election observation, transnational organized crime and terrorism in accordance with international and humanitarian law.

International Institutions and Cooperation

57. We assert that States and multilateral organizations should seek to promote the principles of democracy in furtherance of the global interest.

58. We take into account the Santiago Commitment which states: the democratization of the multilateral system, particularly the United Nations, is the necessary counterpart to democratic practices within nations. Every nation that practices democracy must strive to ensure that in international affairs, decision making is equally open, transparent, legitimate and equitably representative.

59. We stress the importance of membership in global and regional organizations as a means to integrate developing countries into existing networks of economic, political and security partnerships. In this respect, we encourage greater cohesiveness and cooperation among Community of Democracies participants in advocating common views in key international fora on the importance of democracy to global challenges and opportunities.

60. We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. There can be no justification for any act of terrorism on any grounds. Terrorism is a global scourge and a major threat to democracy and international peace and security. It is imperative for the international community to come together to combat terrorism in a long-term, sustained and comprehensive manner to be pursued in full respect of international law, particularly human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

61. We call upon States to abide by their commitments in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Conventions and Protocols and relevant Security Council Resolutions. We further call upon all States to cooperate in implementing the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (2006) and to make concerted efforts to finalize the draft UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism expeditiously.

62. We emphasize the need to support the consolidation of democracy in new and newly transitioning democratic countries including through international cooperation and bilateral assistance during the early years of their transitions, when the democratic process is most vulnerable.

63. We encourage countries to integrate democracy assistance and poverty reduction in their development assistance programs.

64. We agree that open, rule based and non discriminatory trade and financial systems are key to supporting development and good governance. We stress the importance of concluding successfully the World Trade Organization Doha Development Round in this regard.

65. We recognize the role and work of the United Nations Development Program in supporting the building of democratic governance within a sustainable human development framework.

To these ends, we resolve to:

66. Take collaborative measures or actions as outlined in the Seoul Plan of Action to respond to overt threats to democracy, such as disruption of constitutional rule or persistent unconstitutional alteration of the democratic order, by working together within the framework of regional and international organizations.

67. Assist with the consolidation of democracies in countries that are undergoing democratic transitions and other new democracies, and strengthen support for institutions that promote democratic values and strengthen civil society.

68. Encourage and provide incentives both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions to those developing countries that are effectively investing in democratic and economic reforms.

69. Work in consultation with participant countries to intensify efforts to integrate democratic reforms in developing countries into development strategies, policies and programs, taking into consideration the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

70. Support the United Nations Democracy Fund and encourage a continued focus on financing activities that bolster democratic governance and at the same time foster poverty reduction and capacity development.

Functioning and Outreach of the Community of Democracies

71. We are grateful to the Polish Government for offering to host the newly created Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies. The text of the decision to establish the Secretariat constitutes an appendix to this declaration. We call on the new Secretariat to ensure a sustained focus in following up the Community of Democracies commitments.

72. We commend the Convening Group for its efforts in implementing the strategic agenda of our Community, in particular for finalizing its enlargement from ten to 16 members in 2006. We also welcome the emergence of the "International Steering Committee" of the Non-Governmental Process which provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience between governments and civil society actors.

73. We welcome the engagement of civil society in the Community of Democracies and commend the efforts of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) for its input to the invitation process. We commit to engaging the IAC to further strengthen the Community of Democracies.

74. We congratulate the efforts of the four Community of Democracies thematic Working Groups (Democratic Governance and Civil Society; Poverty, Development and Democratic Governance; Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation for Democratic Governance; and Promoting Democracy and Responding to National and Transnational Threats to Democracy) in implementing the decisions taken at the ministerial meetings and in promoting the cause of democracy. We will continue to support the Working Groups as an important mechanism for implementing and continuing work between the Ministerial meetings.

75. We reaffirm the call in the Santiago Commitment for greater cooperation with the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) to promote and consolidate democratic governance in emerging and restored democracies while recognizing the unique purpose of each organization.

76. We declare our commitment to strengthen efforts to mobilize under the auspices of the United Nations Democracy Caucus to coordinate common positions on democracy and human rights issues before United Nations bodies.

77. As agreed in the Santiago Commitment, we will support the candidacy of countries contributing effectively to the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights worldwide in bodies focused on elements of democratic governance, such as the Human Rights Council.

78. We welcome the designation of an International Democracy Day as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

Bamako, November 2007

Appendix

Decision to establish the permanent secretariat of the Community of Democracies

Guided by principles which led to the creation of the Community of Democracies in 2000 in Poland and committed to strengthening the effectiveness of the Community of Democracies in promoting and supporting democracy, participating states of the Community of Democracies are establishing a Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies located in Warsaw with the mission of providing multidimensional support to the Chair and Convening Group of the Community of Democracies.

I. **MANDATE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT:** To undertake functions of administrative, operational and technical nature, in support of and under the direction and guidance of the Convening Group and of the Chair of the Community of Democracies. Within this framework, the Permanent Secretariat will have, among others, the following responsibilities:

A. Administrative functions:

(i) Assist the Chair in preparing draft agendas and minutes of all sessions of the Community of Democracies, as well as Ministerial meetings.

(ii) Serve as the institutional memory and official record keeper of the Community of Democracies, and in particular establish, manage and update Community of Democracies web site, archives and contact data base.

(iii) Provide administrative support for the Chair's exercise of external relations with media and other institutions or entities not directly involved with the Community of Democracies.

B. Operational functions:

(i) Assist the Community of Democracies Chair with the planning, coordination and implementation of decisions adopted and recommendations issued by the Community of Democracies.

(ii) Coordinate the transmission of the Chair's communications to the Community of Democracies members and facilitate at all times information and contacts amongst the Convening Group members.

(iii) Assist the Chair and the Convening Group in their liaison activities with Community of Democracies participants to encourage countries to actively participate in Community of Democracies projects and play a more dynamic role.

(iv) Support the Convening Group and the Chair in coordinating, monitoring and implementing, Community of Democracies' projects and initiatives including those initiated by the Working Groups, when so required.

(v) Facilitate working relationships between the Convening Group, the Chairmanship and the International Steering Committee of the Non-Governmental Process and ensure that non-governmental organizations' initiatives are appropriately considered in the Community of Democracies process and support the Chairmanship in facilitating communications between the governments and non-governmental organizations.

(vi) Provide administrative support to the Chair on budgetary matters.

Technical functions:

(i) Coordinate all aspects of meeting planning and logistics directly related to Sherpa and Convening Group sessions and Ministerial meetings, as well as translation services, research work and media outreach activities.

II.

A. Size and Staffing:

A well-qualified professional staff, including a director, will carry out duties and responsibilities based on the functions stated in the mandate of the Secretariat, in particular administrative, financial, operational, and communication tasks. Staff size will be decided by the Convening Group, with the recommendation that it would initially number in the range of 4-5 personnel and that some flexibility be given, contingent on the activities and projects the Convening Group mandates. Should the Permanent Secretariat need to reconsider the size of its staff, the Convening Group would evaluate the appropriateness and the modalities for achieving it.

(i) Staff members will have the education, experience and language skills to effectively carry out their duties.

(ii) The minimum necessary skills needed by staff include:
- Human and financial resource management
- Administration
- Strategic planning
- Written and verbal communication
- Organizational planning and logistics
- Computer technology

(iii) Recruitment Process

Professional staff will initially be seconded by national governments of the current Community of Democracies countries, on a temporary, one-year (renewable) term basis:

- the Convening Group will select and approve the candidate for the director position, who will be independent

- the director will select the initial members from among national governments' candidates and will submit the selection for approval by the Convening Group.

If any vacancy arises, the director will repeat the procedure mentioned above unless and until the Convening Group makes changes in the procedure, such as open recruitment.

B. Financial Support

(i) Voluntary financial contributions by current Community of Democracies countries, including "in kind" contributions, as well as other forms of private financial support approved by the Convening Group.

(ii) Contributions from other institutions or individuals including public-private partnerships:

Contributions coming from other sources, namely partners within the Community of Democracies or the business sector, would be accepted with clearly established rules.

III. Poland as the host country will enable the Permanent Secretariat to function fully and enter into contractual and financial obligation, subject to Polish legal requirements. Staff will be accredited by the seconding states to the government of Poland. The Republic of Poland will undertake necessary legal measures in accordance with its internal law and pertinent EU regulations to provide privileges and immunities to the Permanent Secretariat equivalent to those generally provided to international organizations.

IV. To insure a mutually beneficial liaison between the Community of Democracies and other bodies, particularly non-governmental organizations, under the guidance and direction of the Community of Democracies and its Chairmanship, the Secretariat would establish working relationships with the International Steering Committee of the non-governmental process to facilitate communication, information sharing and complementary initiatives and to promote networks with Non-Governmental Organizations and other bodies, as appropriate.

V. After two years, the Community of Democracies will evaluate all aspects of the Permanent Secretariat, including but not limited to financing mechanisms and staffing and recruitment procedures, to determine whether any revisions are necessary.

September 2007